

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Please **cancel** claims 2-4, 6, 37-39, 31, 72-74 and 76 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please **Amend** claims 1, 5, 7, 32, 33, 35, 36, 40, 42-45, 48, 49, 52, 53, 56, 57, 60, 61, 64, 67-71, 75, 77-80, 83, 84, 87, 88, 91, 92, 95, 96, 99 and 102-106 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A signal processing method for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document, comprising:

~~a generation step of generating a histogram on the basis of the infrared image signal;~~

an edge correction step of performing edge correction of the infrared image signal and generating an edge-corrected infrared image signal;

a calculation step of calculating a threshold value on the basis of the ~~histogram generated in the generation step~~ edge-corrected infrared image signal;

an extraction step of comparing the threshold value calculated in the calculation step with the edge-corrected infrared image signal ~~components~~, and extracting edge-corrected infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation step of executing an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted in the extraction step,

wherein an edge correction amount in the edge correction step is set in association with the deterioration of MTF due to chromatic aberration of an optical focusing system between visible light and infrared light.

2.-4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, ~~further comprising an edge correction step of performing edge correction of the infrared image signal, wherein the generation calculation step includes [[the]] a generation step of generating [[the]] a histogram on the basis of the edge-corrected infrared image signal that has undergone edge correction, and calculates the threshold on the basis of the histogram generated in the generation step the extraction step includes the step of extracting infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value by comparing the threshold value calculated in the calculation step with the infrared image signal components that have undergone edge correction, and the interpolation step includes the step of interpolating visible light image signal components corresponding to the infrared image signal components extracted in the extraction step using surrounding visible light image signal components.~~

6. (Canceled).

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 32, wherein the generation step includes the step of generating a histogram of frequencies of occurrence of respective gray levels of the infrared image signal.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the calculation step includes the step of calculating the threshold value by subtracting a value given by a predetermined relation from a gray level that represents the infrared image signal.

9. (Original) The method according to claim 8, wherein the calculation step further comprises: a step of calculating a standard deviation; and a step of determining the value to be subtracted on the basis of the standard deviation.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the calculation step comprises: a step of calculating an intermediate value of the frequencies of occurrence of the histogram; and a step of calculating the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from a gray level corresponding to the intermediate value.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 10, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 10, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 10, wherein the calculation step further comprises: a step of calculating a standard deviation; and a step of determining the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the calculation step comprises: a step of calculating a maximum frequency of occurrence of the histogram; and a step of calculating the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from a gray level corresponding to the maximum frequency of occurrence of the histogram.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 14, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 14, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 14, wherein the calculation step further comprises: a step of calculating a standard deviation; and a step of determining the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the calculation step comprises: a step of calculating a maximum gray level of the histogram; and a step of calculating the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from the maximum gray level.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 18, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

20. (Original) The method according to claim 18, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

21. (Original) The method according to claim 18, wherein the calculation step further comprises: a step of calculating a standard deviation; and a step of determining the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

22. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the calculation step comprises: a step of calculating an average gray level of the histogram; and a step of calculating the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from the average gray level.

23. (Original) The method according to claim 22, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

24. (Original) The method according to claim 22, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

25. (Original) The method according to claim 22, wherein the calculation step further comprises: a step of calculating a standard deviation; and a step of determining the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

26. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the calculation step comprises: a step of calculating a maximum gray level of the histogram; and a step of calculating the threshold value by multiplying the maximum gray level by a predetermined value.

27. (Original) The method according to claim 26, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

28. (Original) The method according to claim 26, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

29. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the calculation step comprises: a step of calculating a maximum gray level of the histogram; a step of calculating an average gray level of the histogram; and a step of calculating the threshold value by subtracting a product, which is obtained by multiplying a difference between the maximum gray level and the

average gray level by a predetermined value, from the average gray level.

30. (Original) The method according to claim 29, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

31. (Original) The method according to claim 29, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

32. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 1, further comprising A~~
signal processing method for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal
obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a
visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly
emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent
document, comprising:

[[the]] a segmentation step of segmenting the infrared image signal into a
plurality of blocks, wherein the visible light image signal and infrared image signal are processed
for respective blocks;

a generation step of generating a histogram for each of the plurality of
blocks on the basis of the infrared image signal;

a calculation step of calculating a threshold value for each of the plurality
of blocks on the basis of the histogram generated in the generation step;

an extraction step of comparing the threshold value calculated in the
calculation step with the infrared image signal, and extracting infrared image signal components
not more than the threshold value, for each of the plurality of blocks; and

an interpolation step of executing an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted in the extraction step.

33. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 1, further comprising~~
A signal processing method for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document, comprising:

[[the]] a detection step of detecting signal components corresponding to a holder for holding the transparent document from the infrared image signal components; [[and]]

a replacement step of replacing, when the signal components corresponding to the holder are detected in the detection step, the signal components by a predetermined signal value;

a generation step of generating a histogram on the basis of the infrared image signal that has undergone the replacement step;

a calculation step of calculating a threshold value on the basis of the histogram generated in the generation step;

an extraction step of comparing the threshold value calculated in the calculation step with the infrared image signal that has not undergone the replacement step, and extracting infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation step of executing an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted in the extraction step.

34. (Original) The method according to claim 33, further comprising a step of calculating an average value of the infrared image signal, wherein the predetermined signal value replaced in the replacement step is the average value.

35. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 1, further comprising:~~ A signal processing method for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document, comprising:

a detection step of detecting signal components corresponding to a holder for holding the transparent document from the infrared image signal components; [[and]]

a step of removing, when the signal components corresponding to the holder are detected in the detection step, the signal components;

a generation step of generating a histogram on the basis of the infrared image signal that has undergone the removing step;

a calculation step of calculating a threshold value on the basis of the histogram generated in the generation step;

an extraction step of comparing the threshold value calculated in the calculation step with the infrared image signal that has not undergone the removing step, and extracting infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation step of executing an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted in the extraction step.

36. (Currently Amended) A signal processing apparatus for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document, comprising:

~~generation means for generating a histogram on the basis of the infrared image signal;~~

an edge correction unit adapted to perform edge correction of the infrared image signal and generating an edge-corrected infrared image signal;

~~a calculation means for calculating~~ unit adapted to calculate a threshold value on the basis of the ~~histogram generated by said generation means~~ edge-corrected infrared image signal;

~~an extraction means for comparing~~ unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated by said calculation means with the edge-corrected infrared image signal

components, and ~~extracting~~ extract the edge-corrected infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation means for executing unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the edge-corrected infrared image signal components extracted by said extraction means,

wherein an edge correction amount of said edge correction unit is set in association with the deterioration of the MTF due to chromatic aberration of an optical focusing system between visible light and infrared light.

37.- 39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 36, ~~further comprising edge correction means for performing edge correction of the infrared image signal,~~ wherein said ~~generation means~~ calculation unit generates [[the]] a histogram on the basis of the edge-corrected infrared image signal that has undergone edge correction, and calculates the threshold on the basis of the histogram ~~said extraction means extracts infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value by comparing the threshold value calculated by said calculation means with the infrared image signal components that have undergone edge correction, and said interpolation means interpolates visible light image signal components corresponding to the infrared image signal components extracted by said extraction means using surrounding visible light image signal components.~~

41. (Canceled).

42. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim [[36]] 67, wherein

said generation ~~[[means]]~~ unit generates a histogram of frequencies of occurrence of respective gray levels of the infrared image signal.

43. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit calculates the threshold value by subtracting a value given by a predetermined relation from a gray level that represents the infrared image signal.

44. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 43, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ a standard deviation; and

~~means for determining a unit adapted to determine~~ the value to be

subtracted on the basis of the standard deviation.

45. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said calculation unit ~~[[means]]~~ comprises:

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ an intermediate value of the frequencies of occurrence of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from a gray level corresponding to the intermediate value.

46. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

47. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

48. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a standard deviation; and

~~means for~~ a unit adapted to determine ~~determining~~ the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

49. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a maximum frequency of occurrence of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from a gray level corresponding to the maximum frequency of occurrence of the histogram.

50. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 49, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

51. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 49, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

52. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 49, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a standard deviation; and

~~means for determining~~ a unit adapted to determine the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

53. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a maximum gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from the maximum gray level.

54. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 53, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

55. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 53, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

56. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 53, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a standard deviation; and

~~means for determining~~ a unit adapted to determine the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

57. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate an average gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from the average gray level.

58. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 57, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

59. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 57, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

60. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 57, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ a standard deviation; and
~~means for determining a unit adapted to determine~~ the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

61. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ a maximum gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ the threshold value by multiplying the maximum gray level by a predetermined value.

62. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 61, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

63. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 61, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

64. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a maximum gray level of the histogram;

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate an average gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate the threshold value by subtracting a product, which is obtained by multiplying a difference between the maximum gray level and the average gray level by a predetermined value, from the average gray level.

65. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 64, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

66. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 64, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

67. (Currently Amended) ~~The apparatus according to claim 36, further comprising~~
A signal processing method for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document, comprising:

a segmentation ~~means for segmenting~~ unit adapted to segment the infrared image signal into a plurality of blocks;

a generation unit adapted to generate a histogram for each of the plurality of blocks on the basis of the infrared image signal;

a calculation unit adapted to calculate a threshold value for each of the plurality of blocks on the basis of the histogram generated in the generation step;

an extraction unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated in the calculation unit with the infrared image signal, and extract infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value, for each of the plurality of blocks; and

an interpolation unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted by the extraction unit~~wherein the visible light image signal and infrared image signal are processed for respective blocks.~~

68. (Currently Amended) ~~The apparatus according to claim 36, further comprising~~
A signal processing apparatus for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly emitting infrared light and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document comprising:

a detection [[means]] unit adapted to detect~~for detecting~~ signal components corresponding to a holder for holding the transparent document from the infrared image signal; ~~components; and~~

a replacement means for unit adapted to, when said detection ~~[[means]]~~
unit detects the signal components corresponding to the holder, ~~replacing~~ replace the signal
components by a predetermined signal value;

a generation unit adapted to generate a histogram on the basis of the
infrared image signal that has undergone the replacement process by said replacement unit;

a calculation unit adapted to calculate a threshold value on the basis of the
histogram generated in the generation step;

an extraction unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated by the
calculation unit with the infrared image signal that has not undergone the replacement process,
and extract infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of the
visible light image signal on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted by the
extraction unit.

69. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 68, further
comprising ~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate an average value of the infrared
image signal, wherein the predetermined signal value replaced by said replacement ~~[[means]]~~
unit is the average value.

70. (Currently Amended) ~~The apparatus according to claim 36, further~~
~~comprising:~~ A signal processing method for processing a visible light image signal and infrared
image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively
coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source

for mainly emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document, comprising:

a detection ~~means for detecting~~ unit adapted to detect signal components corresponding to a holder for holding the transparent document from the infrared image signal components; [[and]]

~~means for~~ a removing unit adapted to, when said detection [[means]] unit detects the signal components corresponding to the holder, removing the signal components;

a generation unit adapted to generate a histogram on the basis of the infrared image signal that has undergone the removing process by said removing unit;

a calculation adapted to calculate a threshold value on the basis of the histogram generated in the generation step;

an extraction unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated by the calculation unit with the infrared image signal that has not undergone the removing process, and extract infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted by said extraction unit.

71. (Currently Amended) An image reading apparatus capable of reading a transparent document, comprising:

a visible light source [[for]] that mainly ~~emitting~~ emits visible light;

an infrared light source [[for]] that mainly ~~emitting~~ emits infrared light;

a photoelectric converter ~~for converting~~ adapted to convert an optical image into an electrical signal;

~~generation means for generating a histogram on the basis of an infrared image signal obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating a transparent document with light emitted by said infrared light source;~~

an edge correction unit adapted to perform edge correction of an infrared image signal obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating a transparent document with light emitted by said infrared light source and generating an edge-corrected infrared image signal;

~~a calculation means for calculating~~ unit adapted to calculate a threshold value on the basis of the ~~histogram generated by said generation means~~ edge-corrected infrared image signal;

~~an extraction means for comparing~~ unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated by said calculation means with the edge-corrected infrared image signal components, and ~~extracting~~ extract the edge-corrected infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

~~an interpolation means for executing~~ unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of a visible light image signal, obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating the transparent document with light emitted by said visible light source, on the basis of the edge-corrected infrared image signal components extracted by said extraction means,

wherein an edge correction amount of said edge correction unit is set in association with the deterioration of the MTF due to chromatic aberration of an optical focusing system between visible light and infrared light.

72.- 74. (Canceled)

75. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 71, ~~further comprising edge correction means for performing edge correction of the infrared image signal which is obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating the transparent document with light emitted by said infrared light source; wherein said generation means~~ calculation unit generates ~~[[the]]~~ a histogram on the basis of the edge-corrected infrared image signal ~~that has undergone edge correction, and calculates the threshold on the basis of the histogram said extraction means~~ extracts infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value by comparing the threshold value calculated by said calculation means with the infrared image signal components that have undergone edge correction, and said interpolation means interpolates visible light image signal components corresponding to the infrared image signal components extracted by said extraction means using surrounding visible light image signal components.

76. (Canceled)

77. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim ~~[[71]]~~ 102, wherein said generation ~~[[means]]~~ unit generates a histogram of frequencies of occurrence of respective gray levels of the infrared image signal.

78. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit calculates the threshold value by subtracting a value given by a

predetermined relation from a gray level that represents the infrared image signal.

79. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 78, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a standard deviation; and

~~means for determining~~ a unit adapted to determine the value to be subtracted on the basis of the standard deviation.

80. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate an intermediate value of the frequencies of occurrence of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from a gray level corresponding to the intermediate value.

81. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 80, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

82. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 80, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

83. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 80, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a standard deviation; and

~~means for determining~~ a unit adapted to determine the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

84. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a maximum frequency of occurrence of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from a gray level corresponding to the maximum frequency of occurrence of the histogram.

85. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 84, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

86. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 84, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

87. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 84, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a standard deviation; and

~~means for determining~~ a unit adapted to determine the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

88. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a maximum gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from the maximum gray level.

89. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 88, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

90. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 88, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

91. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 88, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit further comprises:

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ a standard deviation; and
~~means for determining a unit adapted to determine~~ the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

92. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said calculation ~~[[means]]~~ unit comprises:

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ an average gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating a unit adapted to calculate~~ the threshold value by subtracting a predetermined value from the average gray level.

93. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 92, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

94. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 92, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

95. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 92, wherein said calculation [[means]] further comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a standard deviation; and

~~means for determining~~ a unit adapted to determine the predetermined value on the basis of the standard deviation.

96. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a maximum gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate the threshold value by multiplying the maximum gray level by a predetermined value.

97. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 96, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

98. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 96, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

99. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said calculation [[means]] unit comprises:

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate a maximum gray level of the histogram;

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate an average gray level of the histogram; and

~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate the threshold value by subtracting a product, which is obtained by multiplying a difference between the maximum gray level and the average gray level by a predetermined value, from the average gray level.

100. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 99, wherein the predetermined value is pre-stored.

101. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 99, wherein the predetermined value is externally input.

102. (Currently Amended) ~~The apparatus according to claim 71, further comprising~~ An image reading apparatus capable of reading a transparent document, comprising:

a visible light source that mainly emits visible light;

an infrared light source that mainly emits infrared light;

a photoelectric converter adapted to convert an optical image into an electrical signal;

a segmentation ~~means for segmenting~~ unit adapted to segment an [[the]] infrared image signal obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating a transparent document with light emitted by said infrared light source into a plurality of blocks,

~~wherein the visible light image signal and infrared image signal are processed for respective blocks,~~

a generation unit adapted to generate a histogram for each of the plurality of blocks on the basis of the infrared image signal;

a calculation unit adapted to calculate a threshold value for each of the plurality of blocks on the basis of the histogram generated by the generation unit;

an extraction unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated by the calculation unit with the infrared image signal, and extracting infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value, for each of the plurality of blocks; and

an interpolation unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of the visible light image signal obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating the transparent document with light emitted by said visible light source, on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted by said extraction unit.

103. (Currently Amended) ~~The apparatus according to claim 71, further comprising:~~ An image reading apparatus capable of reading a transparent document, comprising:

a visible light source that mainly emits visible light;

an infrared light source that mainly emits infrared light;

a photoelectric converter adapted to convert an optical image into an electrical signal;

a detection means for detecting unit adapted to detect signal components corresponding to a holder for holding the transparent document from [[the]] an infrared image signal components obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating a transparent document with light emitted by said infrared light source; [[and]]

a replacement means for, unit adapted to, when said detection [[means]]
unit detects the signal components corresponding to the holder, replacing replace the signal
components by a predetermined signal value;

a generation unit adapted to generate a histogram on the basis of the
infrared image signal that has undergone the replacement process by said replacement unit;

a calculation unit adapted to calculate a threshold value on the basis of the
histogram generated by the generation unit;

an extraction unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated by
said calculation unit with the infrared image signal, and extracting infrared image signal
components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of a
visible light image signal obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating the
transparent document with light emitted by said visible light source, on the basis of the infrared
image signal components extracted by said extraction unit.

104. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 103, further
comprising ~~means for calculating~~ a unit adapted to calculate an average value of the infrared
image signal, wherein the predetermined signal value replaced by said replacement [[means]]
unit is the average value.

105. (Currently Amended) ~~The apparatus according to claim 71, further~~
~~comprising:~~ An image reading apparatus capable of reading a transparent document, comprising:
a visible light source that mainly emits visible light;

an infrared light source that mainly emits infrared light;

a photoelectric converter adapted to convert an optical image into an electrical signal;

a detection ~~means for detecting~~ unit adapted to detect signal components corresponding to a holder for holding the transparent document from [[the]] an infrared image signal ~~components~~ obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating a transparent document with light emitted by said infrared light source; [[and]]

~~means for~~ a removing unit adapted to, when said detection [[means]] unit detects the signal components corresponding to the holder, removing the signal components;

a generation unit adapted to generate a histogram on the basis of the infrared image signal that has undergone the removing process by said removing unit;

a calculation unit adapted to calculate a threshold value on the basis of the histogram generated by said generation unit;

an extraction unit adapted to compare the threshold value calculated by said calculation unit with the infrared image signal, and extract infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value; and

an interpolation unit adapted to execute an interpolation process of a visible light image signal obtained via said photoelectric converter by illuminating the transparent document with light emitted by said visible light source, on the basis of the infrared image signal components extracted in the extraction unit .

106. (Currently Amended) A computer program product comprising a computer

usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied in said medium for a signal processing method for processing a visible light image signal and infrared image signal obtained by illuminating a transparent document with light beams respectively coming from a visible light source for mainly emitting visible light and an infrared light source for mainly emitting infrared light, and photoelectrically converting optical images of the transparent document, said product including:

first computer readable program code means for segmenting the infrared image signal into a plurality of blocks;

[[first]] second computer readable program code means for generating a histogram for each of the plurality of blocks on the basis of the infrared image signal;

~~second~~ third computer readable program code means for calculating a threshold value for each of the plurality of blocks on the basis of the generated histogram;

[[third]] fourth computer readable program code means for comparing the calculated threshold value with infrared image signal ~~components~~, and extracting infrared image signal components not more than the threshold value, for each of the plurality of blocks; and

~~fourth~~ fifth computer readable program code means for executing an interpolation process of the visible light image signal on the basis of the extracted infrared image signal components.